

Testimony in Support of
SB 651, AAC a Temporary Hold for Certain Family Violence Arrestees
Judiciary Committee
March 16, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Tong and members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Kayla Lathrop and I am employed in a Supervisory position at Safe Futures. Safe Futures serves approximately 5,000 victims of domestic violence and sexual assault in Southeastern Connecticut annually. Our services include a 24/hr hotline, an emergency shelter, counseling and advocacy offices, a transitional living program, supportive housing services; court based family violence victim advocates in two courts, an advocate in a local police department and educators in local school systems.

We urge your support of Senate Bill 651. I have worked on a team with law enforcement responding to domestic violence crimes and participate in follow up visits after an arrest to ensure a victim's safety. I have counseled and safety planned with hundreds of victims. Many of these victims have been re-victimized after an abuser has been released from custody after an assault or who have posted bond a short time after an arrest. The immediate hours following an arrest for domestic violence can be a particularly volatile period for all involved.

It is during this time that an abuser is not in control of their partner and therefore may resort to escalating violence to regain control. Unless conditions of release state otherwise, and sometimes despite conditions set forth by law enforcement, the abuser often returns to the home where the victim is present and further violence and abuse may occur. By holding a particularly dangerous family violence suspect for 12 hours or until the court arraignment, whichever is sooner, the victim will have the opportunity to collect belongings from the family home, secure a safe place to stay and work with

the local domestic violence organization to devise a safety plan. Meanwhile, the abuser is given time to reflect on his or her actions and the potential consequences of any further violence.

Recently I worked intensively with a victim who was dragged into the shower by her boyfriend who turned on the water and began to strangle her. She was able to eventually break free and call 911. This occurred at 2am. I came in for my shift at the police department that morning at 8am. The police officer who responded to the scene immediately approached me with the case and I contacted the victim. Her level of fear in her boyfriend being released put chills through my body. I told her I would find out his bond and whether his family was attempting to bond him out. She told me, "Oh they are friends with a bondsman and the family has already come over here trying to take our television to pawn it." I told her to call the police if the family returned back to her home. I found out his bond was set at 10,000, which meant his family only needed \$700 to work with the bondsman. This victim called my phone 15 times and the police department itself 20 times throughout my shift, her only question being, "Is he out?" The victim did not sleep or eat throughout the time before his arraignment, she was paralyzed in fear of him being released and making his promise to her true, that he would kill her if she ever got him arrested.

The lethality risk factors included in this bill that would trigger the proposed 12 hour hold or held until arraignment, whichever is sooner, are based on years of research by Dr. Jacquelyn C. Campbell at Johns Hopkins University and they represent a critical tool for the criminal justice system to help prevent serious intimate partner violence or homicide.